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ABSTRACT

A survey of religious news in American newspapers from 1849 through 1960 shows a number of changes in the way such coverage was carried out. Some 1,018 daily and weekly newspapers representing different sized communities, different geographical areas, and different times in the church year made up the sample used for a content analysis of religious news. Until the 1830s and 1840s, religious news was haphazard and depended on the availability of newsgatherers and the flow of the news. Then religious news as a circulation booster was discovered and the systematic coverage of religious news gave rise to the religion page. Three developments made the religion page the dominant location for news of church life: advertising, public relations techniques, and the syndicated inspirational column. The religion page has fostered the image that organized religion is a compartmentalized and tranquil institution in American society as a result of editors' desires not to alienate readers. A study of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish religious news space indicates that this has been proportional to the presence of those groups in the population of the United States. (TJ)

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NON-SECTARIAN RELIGION: AN HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SHAPE OF RELIGIOUS NEWS IN THE AMERICAN DAILY PRESS

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Non-Sectarian Religion: An Historical Interpretation of the Shape of Religious News in the American Daily Press

This article describes the historical evolution of the religion page in the American daily press. It discusses how major components of the mass communication process--advertising, public relations, media gatekeepers, and audience structure--have contributed over the past one hundred years to a re-shaping of how the press has interpreted organized religion. The thesis of this paper is that as the journalism process grew increasingly complex religious news became compartmentalized in format and generalized in content.

The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, it examines from an historical viewpoint how components of the mass communication process have affected an important category of newspaper content.[1] Second, it addresses itself to a concern often expressed in literature on American religion: that the mass media have distorted the central concerns of individual religious faith by stressing values common to society as a whole.[2] This article does not attempt to describe the extent to which the press has altered the image of religion in society but tries to explain why the religious content of newspapers did become highly standardized.

Research Method

The data presented in this article is based on a content analysis of a national sample of 1,018 daily and weekly newspapers. The development of the sample was a complex multi-staged process which took into account both the problem of surveying a large mass of data over a long period of time and the seasonal rhythm of church activities. The problem of covering material over a long period of time was resolved by randomly selecting sample years at roughly thirty-year intervals. Such a strategy precluded a careful tracing of trends over time but permitted detailed study of significant developments in various periods. The years selected were 1849, 1874, 1904, 1931, and 1960.

Another problem involved the types of newspapers to be sampled because newspaper characteristics vary in different types of communities. Accordingly, four types of newspapers were identified for the study--dailies serving communities with populations over 100,000; dailies serving communities under 100,000; weeklies serving urban communities (i.e. those with a population of 2,500 or larger); and weeklies serving rural communities. To develop a national sample the newspaper population was further stratified into the four basic U.S. Census regions--Northeast, Northwest, South, and West. The size of the sample was dictated by the need to study two specimens for each type of newspaper. Therefore two newspaper specimens were selected for each type of newspaper in each census region for each sample year. The potential number of newspaper titles was 32 for each sample year, but because the far western press was still embryonic in the mid-nineteenth century, all data cells could not be filled for 1848. The papers selected came from the population of newspaper titles listed in Newspapers in Microform 1943-1972.[3] Selection was weighted in favor of newspapers with lengthy publishing histories, and fifty-three titles were included in the

study. Even in the limited sample of newspapers the potential amount of data was too large for a single researcher to gather. Consequently twelve issues of each weekly were randomly selected in each sample year.

A second general problem in developing the sample was to take account of the seasonal changes in church life. The Christian calendar generally falls into three seasons--Advent-Christmas-Ephiphany, which run from October through January, Lent-Easter-Pentecost, from February through May, and a summer season, June through September. The calendar for American Judaism follows a similar rhythm. To account for the seasonal shifts of religious activity, each sample year was divided into three, four-month periods. For daily newspapers four issues were selected for each season; for weeklies, one issue was selected. In addition the reporting of church news in the press historically has clustered around three days of the week--Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Saturday editions have featured church and synagogue announcements, Sunday religious content has offered token acknowledgement of the Sabbeth, Monday's news has described action in the churches the previous day. In recent years the structure of church news has tended to be confined to a Saturday religion page, but for most of the period of this study the three-day pattern held true.

A third general problem in the sampling process was the procedure to study individual issues. To study the average amount of religious space in each issue and the distribution of references to various religious groups, three pages were selected at random, one from each third of an issue. Thus, every page in an issue had an equal chance of being selected.

Although one researcher gathered most of the data, the reliability of the categories used in the study was established by a panel of five coders who were in 85 percent agreement among themselves when they applied the established

categories to a sample of data.[4]

The Rise of the Religion Page

Ever since the Pilgrims and Puritans settled in the New World, American culture has been strongly influenced by organized religion.[5] Accordingly the American press has long exhibited a strong interest in church life. A glance at eighteenth century newspapers indicates that they reprinted sermons, reported on religious developments, and at times became organs for the venting of arguments among clerical leaders.[6] The publication of religious news in the eighteenth century press, however, was largely haphazard and depended on the availability of news gatherers and the flow of events. Journalists continued to approach religious news in an unsystematic manner until the 1830's and 1840's when editors of the mass-oriented "penny press" discovered that stories of church life were potential circulation boosters. James Gordon Bennett, the innovative publisher of the New York Herald seems to have been more responsible than any other single individual to develop the systematic coverage of religion.[7] Bennett first exploited religious news in 1839 when he sent reporters to cover the proceedings of the annual "religious anniversary meetings" in New York City. These great annual conclaves pulled together all the religious reform and evangelical movements of the day and were the focus of wide national interest. Frederick Hudson, Bennett's long-time managing editor has described how the Herald's staff saw in these meetings potential news stories which rival papers were ignoring:

> These large religious societies had met in that city for years, but their doings, so far as the public were concerned, were only to be found in their annual reports, printed by the societies, of limited circulation, and which gave the public only the financial exhibit of each. Editorial articles in the few religious newspapers of the day, and a brief paragraph or two of the proceedings of the most prominent of the societies, appeared in the secular journals. Nothing of the audiences, nothing of the spirit of these meetings could be found anywhere. Millions of dollars had been contributed and expanded, and only a few knew what good the money had accomplished. Opening the columns of a widely-circulated daily paper to this new matter for public perusal and public thought was a novel and useful enterprise.[8]

Hudson noted that rival newspapers soon followed the Herald's lead. With the discovery that news of important religious events stimulated circulation, Bennett took the next logical step and sent reporters into the local churches to increase his coverage of church life.[9] At first some ministers condemned the presence of newspaper reporters in their services, especially the Herald's. The sensational content of Bennett's paper offended them and he had often baited churchmen with anti-clerical editorials.[10] Bennett was sensitive to the pluralistic structure of his paper's audience, because his reporters covered the services of most of the city's denominations, including the Catholic masses of the growing Irish immigrant community. The Herald first published its sermon reports every Tuesday but in the 1860's, when technology had quickened the process of news, sermon reports became part of the regular fare of Monday editions. Other dailies in New York and elsewhere gradually began to follow the Herald's practice.

While the "penny press" was developing its coverage of religious events, it also began to act as a bulletin board for church announcements. Notices from churches about forthcoming services and events began to appear in many daily newspapers of the 1840's. As city populations expanded and the number of churches increased, these columns of announcements gradually expanded in size.

Some papers saw potential revenue in this steady stream of notices and began to charge the churches a fee for publishing them. By the 1870's the larger dailies had developed full religion pages and tried to make their grey bulletin boards of small agate type more interesting by adding feature and news material. Such content generally appeared as news briefs grouped under such headings as "Religious Intelligence" or "Church News." By the early twentieth century the weekend religion page had become almost universal in the daily press, a development which affected the general flow of religious content to newspaper audiences. Instead of running stories about religion as they occurred, newspaper editors began to hold them for their special religion pages. As a result, religious news, except for highly sensational or major events, appeared to be timeless and less important than other types of stories. This development can be seen in Figure 1 which compares the average amount of religious space on the front and inside pages in the sample of newspapers for each of the five time periods. In the 1840's, when newspaper editors were just beginning to systematically cover religion but had yet to develop full religion pages, most religious news appeared on the first news pages. By the 1870's, when religion pages were well-established, approximately 70 percent of all religious news appeared on the inside pages. This pattern was repeated in the three twentieth century time periods.

Figure 1 about here

As soon as religious news was compartmentalized into the religion page, it became subject to three further developments which affected its general shape--advertising, publicity, and syndicated inspirational columns.

Use of display advertising techniques by big department stores and national brand advertisers coincided with the development of the weekly religion page.[11] Established religious groups eschewed such forms of publicity but by the 1870's the religious evangelist Dwight L. Moody was using the advertising methods of big business to draw crowds to his mass revival meetings. Moody, however, placed his ads on the entertainment page where he felt he could reach a larger audience.[12] In the first years of the twentieth century many churchmen continued to resist the promotional practices of big business but by the 1920's newspaper advertisments had become an accepted way of reaching out to mass audiences. Cultural historian, Lucy Maynard Salmon, has described organized religion's relunctant conversion to advertising techniques during this period:

> The advertisement of churches and advertising campaigns to promote church attendance have not as yet met with universal favor, and the proposal so to use the advertisement has given rise to the charge that the churches are becoming sensational and to heated discussion as to whether church advertising is ethical. But it is significant of the dependence of the public on advertising and therefore of the apparent necessity of using this means to secure a desired end, that each year apparently sees more and more extensive use of advertising by the churches, and that a conference on advertising as a means of stimulating church attendance was held in connection with the Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World in Philadelphia in 1916. The question of whether the churches shall advertise or not is apparently superseded by the discussion of what are the most effective means of advertising them.13

Newspapers sweetened organized religion's capitulation to modern business practices by offering reduced advertising fees. Some newspapers actively began to solicit such ads, making churches an assigned category for their display salesmen to visit each week. By the mid-twentieth century display advertisments had become an important component of most religion pages. Yet, on a few scattered papers, where editors were offended by the commercialization of religious news, there were no such ads. One of these papers

was The Record of Troy, New York, whose editor wrote to Editor and Publisher that the function of his church page was to "build up the morality and citizenship of our community." He then chastized his fellow editors for their commercial exploitation of religion.

> One of the great difficulties of newspapers today is that some publishers want to squeeze the last penny out of their papers. They usually succeed and make money. On the other hand they lose the happy, hearty support of their public and some day they may regret it.[14]

The position of The Record's editor was atypical. Not only were local religious groups buying display ads, but by the 1950's big advertising agencies had entered the field as well. One of these was the J. Walter Thompson Company who started an annual "Religion in American Life" campaign. The agency designated November as RIAL Month and sent thousands of advertising mats to dailies and weeklies throughout the nation. The basic message of the ads each year was for "all Americans to worship regularly" and "the importance of religion in personal, family and community life." The ads were to be paid for by local businesses.[15] The net effect of these ads was to foster the image that regardless of their individual faiths Americans shared a common religious experience. Such messages helped to shape the tone of the entire religion page.

A second major development which influenced religious news was the advance of public relations techniques. Like advertising practices, the religious use of public relations began in the late nineteenth century and came into full flower in the twentieth. The historical record of church publicity is hazy but apparently the first groups to develop public relations campaigns in the press were Seventh Day Adventists and Christian Scientists.[16] Both denominations emerged in the late nineteenth century as offshoots of mainline Protestantism and faced considerable hostility in the press. Their campaigns

were aimed at changing their negative public image and getting their stance across on key public issues. Such campaigns contributed to the present-day non-sectarian emphasis of most religion pages. By the mid-1920's many of the large denominations had set up public relations departments to work with the press. Among these were the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Southern Methodists. The importance of these public relations departments in the development of copy for the religion pages of the nation's press is manifest in an article published in a 1926 issue of the Methodist Bulletin:

> There has been a remarkable growth in the number of newspapers in the United States which now either have church editors or are giving special attention, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays, to to religious news and reports. We are finding no difficulty in placing real interesting news matter. If there is any difficulty, it lies in deciding what information regarding the church is is considered news of general public interest.
>
> So insistent has the demand for church news become that several large church organizations are cooperating by organizing church press bureaus.[17]

As the flow of publicity handouts from religious organizations increased, newspapers became dependent on such copy to fill the news hole on their religion pages. To be sure much of the material sent to the press proved unusable, especially if it was propagandistic. A survey in 1941 by the Missions Public Relations Office found that newspapers regarded only 25 percent of the material they received up to journalistic standards.[18] But despite the amateurish quality of such publicity, especially that generated in local parishes, newspapers received enough that met their needs. A 1952 survey of religion page editors indicated, for example, that most of the copy they used came by mail or telephone and that the editors themselves wrote few stories.[19] Meanwhile, the clergy had come to realize that the religion page of their local newspapers was their major communication link to the

public. A 1960 survey of 1500 Protestant clergymen in Michigan indicated that they ranked the religion page even above church bulletins and news letters as an effective form of promoting churgh activities.[20] Since the churches were not likely to produce controversial material about themselves, the net effect of the press's dependency on public relations copy was the presentation of a bland and highly standardized image of church life on the religion page.

The third development to affect the content of the religion page was the syndicated inspirational column. As with advertising and public relations, the syndicated column surfaced in the late nineteenth century and matured in the twentieth. The first syndicated religious feature was "The International Sunday School Lesson" which in 1872 began to offer weekly instruction on the history and meaning of the Bible from a mainline Protestant point of view. In 1892 the column was taken over by William T. Ellis, a Presbyterian minister with journalism experience, who was to write it for over fifty years.[21] The column bacame the property of the National Council of Churches in the 1950's and was renamed simply "The Bible Speaks." By the 1960's the column had become the oldest and longest-running of any syndicated newspaper feature.[22]

The columns which achieved the largest circulations, however, were those which projected the personalities of well-known clergymen. One of the earliest columns of this type was "Talmadge Sermons" written by Frank DeWitt Talmadge, a popular New York minister, which ran at the beginning of the twentieth century in over 500 newspapers.[23] By the 1950's the personalized inspirational column had reached its full flowering. "Confident Living," the column by Norman Vincent Peale, then the most popular clergyman in America, was one of the most important. Peale's philosophy of "positive thinking" appealed to middle class Americans of all faiths because he offered simple creed-free solutions to individual problems.[24] Another popular column was "My Answer" produced by the

Billy Graham Evangelical Association which provided simplified explanations about biblical verses. The theological range of the columns straddled most of the nation's faiths. General Features Corporation, for example, offered four different columns in the 1950's, including one by the National Radio Pulpit Preacher, Dr. Ralph Sockman, which the organization promised would build a "nonsectarian" and a "well-rounded" church page. For Catholics there was the Paulist Feature Service which advertised itself as "accentuating the positive" side of the news.[25]

All of these developments--advertising, publicity handouts, and syndicated columns had by the mid-twentieth century made the religion page the dominant location for news of church life. This development becomes all the more dramatic when comparing it to decline in the reporting of sermons and other church activities in Monday editions. The practice which James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald initiated in 1844 was still imitated by some papers, in the 1960's. But, by then, most dailies had abandoned their coverage of sermons. Table 1, which presents the percentage of dailies in the newspaper sample with weekend and Monday religion pages, shows that by 1960 all papers had weekend religious bulletin board pages and none reported in Monday editions about what

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Table 1 about here

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had occurred in the churches. Table 1 indicates that journalistic interest in church sermons reached its peak at the beginning of the twentieth century and remained strong into the 1930's. But even when the sermon report was at its zenith there were indications it was losing popular appeal. One turn-of the-century press analyst, for example, complained that most sermons were too

dull to receive coverage:

> The clergyman of today who has a vital message to deliver knows full well that his words pronounced in the presence of, perhaps, 500 persons will the following day be read by thousands. If complaint is made that the newspapers do not print longer reports of sermons, the editors reply that they would gladly give more space to them were they worthy of it. The average sermon, they declare, is mediocre, full of platitudes and lacking in vital force. Such sermons are neither helpful to congregations nor deserving of publicity.[26]

The emergence of the syndicated column solved the press's problem of presenting value-laden content. And it had become clear by the mid-twentieth century that the inspirational column had become the dominant format for disseminating religious values in the secular press. But there was a cost in the shift from sermon to column. Church sermons gave newspaper readers some insight into the differing theologies and concerns of a community's churches. The syndicated column, by contrast, was designed for a mass audience and emphasized commonly shared values. The non-sectarian tone of inspirational columns was important to newspaper editors in the twentieth century, because they were very sensitive to the pluralistic structure of their audiences.

The Press and Religious Pluralism

A major reason why the religion pages of daily newspapers have stressed non-sectarianism is that editors have not wanted to alienate any religious group in their audiences.[27] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century European immigration transformed America's religious culture. The Protestant-dominated community of the nineteenth century was split into three subcommunities--Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism--in the twentieth.[28] Most Roman Catholic and Jewish immigrants settled in cities and became part of the daily press's audience.[29] In response to this development

the press showed increasing attention to the religious activities of its new readers. By the 1940's Protestants were complaining that Catholics and Jews received more attention than their numbers warranted. Religion editors rejected this view. One New York editor observed in 1941 that "if anyone ever really measured the space all the Protestants get he'd be amazed. It far exceeds the Catholic total space."[30] Two studies in the mid-1940's were to support that conclusion. One survey, done under the auspices of the Methodist Information Services, found that Protestants received twice as much coverage as Catholics. Another by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America reached a similar conclusion.[31] Despite such studies the view that the immigrant churches, especially Roman Catholicism dominated religious news in the urban daily press persisted into the 1960's. One scholar who raised that point was the church historian Martin E. Marty, who suggested that in stressing news of Roman Catholic life readers belonging to other faiths were encouraged to feel that they were part of that community:

> Newspaper coverage illustrates the metropolitan dominance of Roman Catholicism. One instance: The death of Samuel Cardinal Stritch got more Chicago newspaper lineage than did that of any political figure in memory. Hardly any Protestant leader's passing in the past five years was noted on the front page. Of course Stritch ruled an archdiocese of 1.8 million Catholics, most of whom read newspapers. Complaints against the newspapers were unwarranted. They printed what sold. . . . The mass media men knew their audience. If an occasional Protestant, Jewish or other secularist voice complained about references in the press to Stritch as "our Cardinal" or Pius as "our spiritual leader," the complaint was promptly rebuked in print by other Protestants, Jews, or secularists, for raising an intolerant point in a moment of tragedy.[32]

The sense that Roman Catholicism dominated religious news stemmed in part from its monolithic structure which gave it an advantage in generating front page publicity. But when the total amount of space given to religion

is assessed, Roman Catholics historically received attention proportionate only to their numerical strength in society. In 1957 the National Opinion Research Center conducted a survey to determine the national distribution of religious affiliation. NORC found that Protestants made up two-thirds of the population, Catholics less than a third, and Jews about four percent.[33] An analysis of the distribution of references to the three religious communities in the national sample of daily newspapers in 1960 discloses a similar pattern. Table 2 shows the similarity between the national opinion survey and the daily press survey. This suggests that editors in the mid-nineteenth century consciously tried to be fair to the three religious communities.

Table 2 about here

There are no national surveys earlier than NORC's 1957 study which attempted to assess the religious affiliation of the American people. But the distribution of references to religious groups in the national daily press from the 1870's on is probably an accurate measure. Table 3 shows the shifts in distribution that occurred across the five time periods.

Table 4 about here

The data for the year 1849 are not an accurate mirror of religious life because the systematic coverage of religion at the national level was still in an embryonic stage. There were few religion pages and only the most interesting events received any attention. But by 1874 the religion page had become a part of most daily newspapers, and consequently information about

local community events received more attention. The gradual drop in the proportionate attention Protestants received from 1874 on coupled with the increased interest toward Roman Catholics and Jews reflects the changes that took place in the daily press's audiences.

The growing complexity in the religious affiliation of newspaper audiences prompted careful editorial screening of the news of church life so that no important part of the audience was offended. Warren Breed has demonstrated in a negative content analysis of newspaper stories that religion ranked second to economic and political news as the type of information which received the closest scrutiny. In a survey of anthropological studies of American communities in the twentieth century,he found that the press tended to hold out stories of low attendance at church services, bitter feelings clergymen had about obstacles to their work, and rivalries between churches.[34] Kenneth Underwood discovered the same cautious behavior manifested by the Holyoke Transcript during a religious dispute in 1940 that sharply divided Protestants and Catholics living in the western Massachusetts community. The controversy was sparked by a planned visit of birth control advocate Margaret Sanger. The issue gained national attention and lasted for several weeks, yet Underwood found that the Transcript carried just one two-and-a-half-inch story and three letters to the editor after Sanger's visit.[35] By filtering out stories that depicted sections of their audience in conflict, newspaper editors promoted the image that religious life in America was based on broad consensus values which overarched individual denominations and sects. Martin E. Marty has suggested that the press's emphasis on consensus prevented it from presenting the central teachings of "the historic faiths." Instead, Marty said, content of the religion page offered bland descriptions of what

individual faiths were like or urged readers to be good Americans and believe in God.[36]

The pluralistic structure of newspaper audiences has also affected the religious coverage of syndicated and wire news services. Wire services such as the Associated Press and United Press International were so cautious about religious news that they did not systematically report on church life until the 1950's when the importance of religion seemed to be on the uprise in American society. The Associated Press gingerly entered the field first when one of its rewrite men, George W. Cornell began a weekly column "Religion Today" which sought to provide a "broad picture of religious activity." Cornell was to continue covering religion on a part-time basis into the late 1970's. The UPI was even more cautious and waited until 1958 before it asked Louis Cassels, one of the agency's Washington reporters, to take up the task. Cassels was to continue his column "Religion in America" until his death in 1974. He was to recall that when he "ventured into the touchy field of writing seriously about religion. . .newspapers and wire services. . .looked upon religion as a taboo topic and confined their coverage of it to superficial accounts."[38] Both Cassels and Cornell developed stories that had more depth than church publicity material offered, but they carefully eschewed controversy. This attitude was also shared by the syndicated Religious News Service which began in 1933 under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews to combat religious bigotry and prejudice. It did so according to its managing editor, Lillian R. Block by "reporting objectively developments of all religious groups and keeping them informed about one another." In presenting its client newspapers with "objective developments" RNS faced the hazard of reporting on conflict news. The agency handled this problem according to Block by taking care "to demonstrate that religious news need not be 'explosive' if

facts are presented with care. . ."[39] By the 1960's syndicated and wire services were providing most of the national religious stories to the nation's press. The sensitivity of their stories to the pluralistic structure of newspaper audiences reinforced the consensus imagery which advertising and church publicity had developed earlier in the century.

Conclusion

This article has pointed to some of the historical factors which have shaped the religion page of the daily press. It has also described how advertising, church publicity, syndicated news services, and editors collectively stressed non-sectarian imagery about religion in response to the pluralistic structure of newspaper audiences. To be certain the press at times has given front page play to religious stories which were sensational or conflict-laden. Such events have always been part of complex urban communities. But since the late nineteenth century the dominant position for news of church life has been on the weekend religion page which has fostered the image that organized religion is a compartmentalized and tranquil institution in American society.

Footnotes

1 For general discussions of the mass communication process see: Ray Eldon Hiebert, Donald F. UnGurait, and Thomas W. Bohn, Mass Media: An Introduction to Modern Communication (New York: David Mackay Company, 1974); William L. Rivers, Theodore Peterson, and Jay W. Jensen, The Mass Media and Modern Society 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1971); and Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts, eds., The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, rev. ed. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

2 Scholars who have advanced this view include: Peter L. Berger, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies: Christian Commitment and the Religious Establishment in America (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday & Co., 1961); A. Roy Eckhardt, The Surge of Piety in America: An Appraisal (New York: Association Press, 1958); Andrew M. Greeley, The Denominational Society: A Sociological Approach to Religion in America (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1972); Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology, 2nd ed. rev. (Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1960) and Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

3 U.S. Library of Congress; Catalog Publication Division, Newspapers in Microform, 1948-1972 (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1973).

4 Reliability of categories was also computed by ranking the patterns of agreement among judges. For symbol analysis the percentage of agreement among five judges was 70 percent. For a discussion of the pattern of agreement test see Ole T. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 141-142).

5 For general discussions of the importance of religion in American history see: Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.J.: Image Books, 1975) and William A. Clebsch, From Sacred to Profane America: The Role of Religion in American History (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

6 A systematic study of religious content in the colonial press has yet to be done. But the importance of religious news has been noted in Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism: A History: 1690-1960, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 53. Moreover, colonial printers probably felt economic pressure in printing religious information since religious organizations were the major customers for many printers. On this point see MaryAnn Yodelis, "Who Paid the Piper? Publishing Economics in Boston, 1773-1775," Journalism Monographs no. 38 (Lexington, Ken.: Association for Education in Journalism, 1975)

7 See Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972, p. 173.

8 Frederick Hudson, Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), p. 453.

9 Ibid

10 For a discussion of Bennett's attitude toward organized religion see Oliver Calson, The Man Who Made News (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1942).

11 An interesting analysis of the importance of department store and national brand advertising to American culture is presented in Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Democratic Experience (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

12 Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and their Impact upon Religion in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958), p. 206.

13 Lucy Maynard Salmon, The Newspaperman and the Historian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 352-353.

14 "Church News," Editor and Publisher, 81 (September 11, 1948), p. 20.

15 "RIAL Ad Kits Sent to Major Newspapers," Editor and Publisher, 91 November 8, 1958), p. 30.

16 The Seventh Day Adventist Church established a formal bureau in 1912 in response to public attacks on its opposition to Sunday laws. One authoritative public relations textbook, Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Relations, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1971), p. 84, has suggested that the Seventh Day Adventists established the first formal bureau. However, in the mid-1890's the Christian Science Church had established the Committee on Publication to meet adverse publicity. For a discussion of the early work of that committee see Robert Peel, Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977).

17 Quoted in Editor and Publisher, 59 (July 3, 1926), p. 65.

18 "Church Publicity Acceptance Checked," Editor and Publisher, 93 (April 16, 1941), p.22.

19 Robert Desmond Collection, Mass Communications History Center of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, "Church News Gathering," env.1.

20 "Where the Churches Go to Newspapers," Editor and Publisher, 93 (April 16, 1960), p. 39.

21 "Dr. Ellis Writes Religion Feature for 52 Years," Editor and Publisher, 82 (October 1, 1949), p. 16.

22 "Religious Syndicate Under New Name," Editor and Publisher, 83 (December 23, 1950), p. 42.

23 Frank L. Blanchard, "Pulpit and Press," Journalism; Its Relation to and Influence upon the Political, Social, Professional, Financial, and Commercial Life of the United States of America (New York: New York Press Club, 1905), p. 178.

24 Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People vol. 2 pp. 451-453.

25 Charles Palms, "Non-sectarian Religious Features Supplied Free," Editor and Publisher, 90 (Septmener 7, 1957), p. 60

26 Blanchard, Journalism, p. 178.

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28 The classical statement on this sociological change in American religious life is Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew.

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30 "Church Publicity Acceptance Checked," Editor and Publisher, 74 (April 26, 1941), p. 92

31 "Better Press Policy on Religion Seen," Editor and Publisher, 79 (October 19, 1946), p. 28

32 Marty, The New Shape of American Religion, p. 75.

33 Hazel Gaudet Erskine, " The Polls: Organized Religion," The Public Opinion Quarterly, 29 (Summer 1965), p. 327.

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35 Kenneth Underwood, Protestant & Catholic: Religious and Social Interaction in an Industrial Community (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1957), p. 24.

36 Martin E. Marty, The Improper Opinion: Mass Media and the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, no date), pp. 56-57.

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38 Quoted in Janet Tronstad, "A Perspective on Pluralism: An Analysis of Louis Cassels' UPI Column "Religion in America"--1959-1973", (M.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1977), p.3.

39 Ray Erwin, "Religious News Service Honored," Editor and Publisher, 93 (July 23, 1960), p. 50.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES AND TABLES

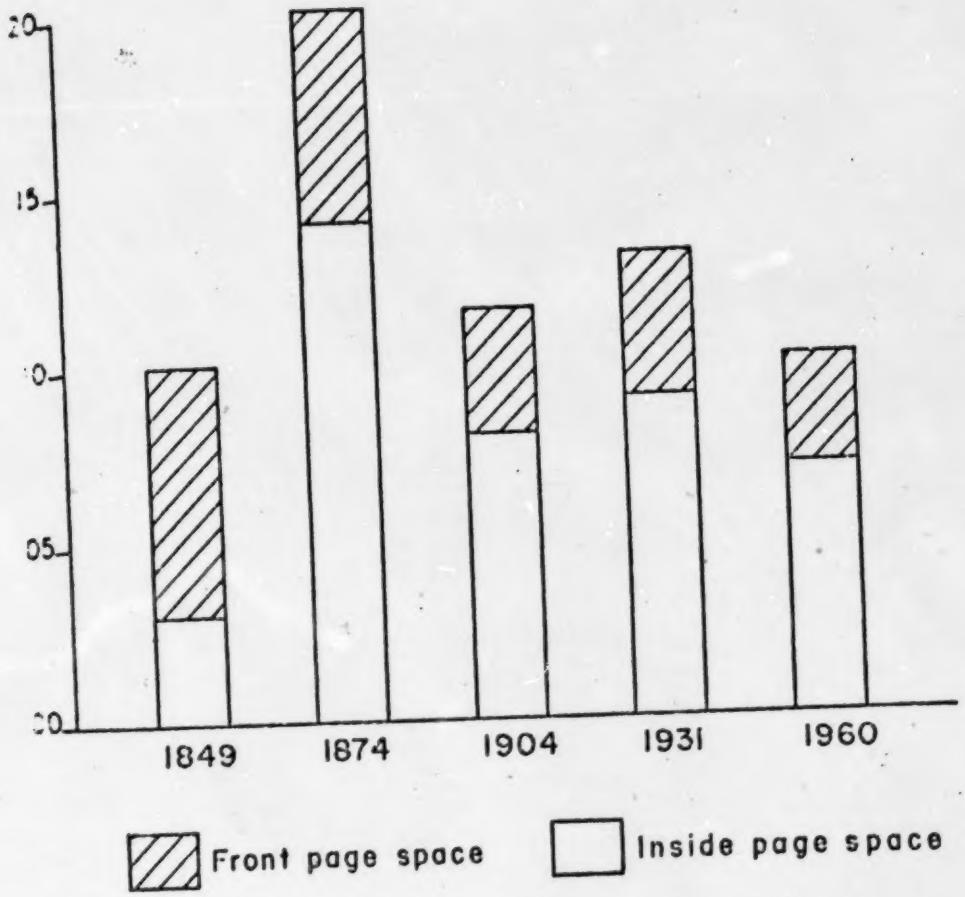

Figure 1 The Average Amount of Religious Space on the Front and Inside Pages of the Total Newspaper Sample, 1849-1960 (.1 = One Tenth of a Standardized Newspaper Column).

TABLE 1

Percentage of Urban Dailies in the Total Sample with a) Saturday or Sunday Religion Pages and b) Monday Religion Pages, 1849-1960

	1849		1874		1904		1931		1960	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sat./Sun. Page	0	0	8	50	13	81	16	100	16	100
Monday Page	0	0	2	13	8	50	7	44	0	0

TABLE 2

A Comparison of the Distribution of Religious Identity in the United States (Based on a 1957 National Opinion Research Center Survey) and the Distribution of Religious Denominational Symbols in the National Press Sample of 1960. Stated in Percentages

	NORC Survey 1957	Press Sample 1960
Protestants	68	61
Catholics	24	32
Jews	04	06
Other	04	01
Total Percentage	100	100

TABLE 3

Distribution of Religious Denominational Symbols in All Newspapers. Stated in Percentages at the Total Sample, Daily and Weekly Newspaper Levels, 1849-1960

	1849	1874	1904	1931	1960
Total Sample					
Number of Symbols	(276)	(2000)	(1578)	(1662)	(1743)
Protestant	62	84	73	76	61
Catholic	25	15	20	21	32
Jew	12	01	07	03	06
Other	01	00	01	00	01
Total Percent	100	100	100	100	100
Dailies					
Number of Symbols	(246)	(1807)	(1352)	(1273)	(1342)
Protestant	66	84	70	72	54
Catholic	20	15	21	24	38
Jew	13	02	08	04	07
Other	01	00	01	00	01
Total Percent	100	101	101	100	100
Weeklies					
Number of Symbols	(30)	(193)	(226)	(384)	(401)
Protestant	53	90	89	90	84
Catholic	47	10	10	10	15
Jew	00	00	01	00	01
Other	00	00	00	00	00
Total Percent	100	100	100	100	100